

Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board

--a coalition of farmers and other Canadians in support of democracy, and a farmer-controlled CWB

NEWS RELEASE

October 10, 2008

"WHY WON'T HARPER LET FARMERS VOTE?—NO CANADIAN IS SAFE"

Saskatoon, SK, October 10, 2008--The *Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board (FCWB)* today challenged the Harper government to demonstrate its support for grassroots democracy by immediately dropping its opposition to an expedited court hearing on the legality of Ag Minister Gerry Ritz manipulation of the voters' list being used in this fall's CWB farmer director elections.

Stephen Harper has once again secretly acted to stop farmers from voting in upcoming Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) elections, but farmers and citizens are fighting back. Working through an organization called *Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board*, Canadians who respect democracy and a farmer-controlled Wheat Board currently have two cases before the Federal Court. With court appearances and other legal proceedings on October 6, 9, and 17, the *Friends* are working to get these legitimate farm voters back on the voters' list.

Using a secret Ministerial Order in July 2008, the Harper government issued instructions to the CWB to take thousands of legitimate voters off of the voters list—contrary to the CWB Act and its Regulations. Parliament gave these producers the right to determine the CWB's future through director elections; this is now being stolen from them.

"It is astonishing and disturbing that the Harper government is opposed to having this matter heard quickly. What are they hiding? We have asked for an 'expedited hearing' so that the elections will be run fairly and smoothly, but the Harper government is opposing dealing with the issue in a timely way. If Harper really thinks it is legal to pick and choose only his friendly voters, why is he afraid to let a judge rule on our case?" asked Stewart Wells. Wells is an Applicant on both challenges currently before the Federal Court.

The *Friends of the CWB* have proposed that all legitimate voters according to the CWB Act be sent a ballot, regardless of Harper's new rule restricting ballots to only those who have delivered grain to the CWB during the last 15 months. The two streams of returned ballots could be kept segregated until the Federal Court has ruled on the legality of Harper's new rules.

"The Harper government has been challenged in court on three separate occasions on farmer issues, and been found guilty all three times of breaking Canadian laws. Rather than upholding Canadian law, the Harper government is striking at the very core of Canadian democracy and interfering with the people's right to vote. I hope that voters in the general election on Tuesday will think about the ways that Harper is attacking basic democratic rights—no Canadian is safe," commented Cam Goff, a grain producer from Hanley, SK, and a candidate for CWB director in District 6. Goff is also an Applicant on both court challenges

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